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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8271
INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE
RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/CJCS WASHINGTON DC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KABUL 001725

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DEPT FOR SCA/FO (A/S BOUCHER AND DAS GASTRIGHT), SCA/RA,
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/20/2017

TAGS: EAID ECON ENRG EAIR PGOV PREL AF
SUBJECT: AFGHANISTAN - JCMB "INFORMAL GROUP" REVIEWS
ITALIAN PROPOSAL FOR ROME JCMB MEETING IN JULY

REF: KABUL 1527

Classified By: Ambassador William Wood for reasons 1.4(b)&(d).

SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUEST

1.(C) At a meeting of an informal group of donors on May 17, Italy has formally proposed holding a half-day Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB) meeting in Rome on the morning of July 3 immediately preceding the Rule of Law Conference scheduled for July 3-4. UNAMA Special Representative of the Secretary General Koenigs suggested that the meeting follow the format of the Berlin political directors' meeting in January. The Italian Ambassador asked that delegations be led by political directors and indicated that the UN Secretary General and NATO Secretary General would attend the event. He also said that Solana might lead the EC delegation. Koenigs proposed that either regional economic cooperation or sub-national governance be the overarching theme of the conference. Koenigs suggested that reports on election preparations, the June DIAG conference in Tokyo, energy and civil aviation be presented. After consensus was reached on accepting the Italian invitation pending consultation with the Afghans, Koenigs asked Ambassadors to seek guidance from capitals on the agenda items and level of representation. He said the informal group would reconvene in two weeks to set the agenda for the meeting. UNAMA has now called an Informal Group meeting for May 27.

2.(C) Post doubts that a half-day JCMB can accomplish much and prefers that regional economic cooperation serves as the theme for the meeting. We support an agenda including the four issues that Koenigs proposed. Since the major issues in the notional agenda are matters of economic policy, Post suggests that the USG adopt a position of recommending that economic directors lead delegations to the meeting and that the Department consider asking EB A/S Sullivan to lead the

USdel. Post requests Department guidance for the May 27 informal group meeting.
END SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUEST.

ITALIANS FORMALLY PROPOSE ROME JCMB MEETING

3.(C) At a May 17 meeting of major donor Ambassadors called by UNAMA Special Representative Tom Koenigs, the Italian Ambassador formally proposed holding the next meeting of the JCMB in Rome on the morning of July 3. Koenigs envisioned a three-hour JCMB. This half-day meeting would precede the formal opening of the Rule of Law Conference set for July 3 and 4. The Italian asked that representatives from capital at the political director level lead delegations to the meeting. He advised that both the United Nations Secretary General and the NATO Secretary General had confirmed their participation and indicated that Javier Solana might lead the EU delegation.

4.(C) Koenigs advised the gathering that he had briefed President Karzai on the proposal. He said that JCMB VI would be a non-reporting meeting based on Working Group input. However, he indicated that a meeting in Rome could capitalize on high-level representation from capitals to build momentum on key issues.

5.(C) Recalling the organization of the Berlin JCMB meeting, Koenigs suggested that the group come to consensus on an overarching theme for the meeting, as well as three or four key issues that a discussion by capital representatives could advance. All representatives would have the opportunity to speak on the meeting's theme. Reports would be delivered on the other agenda items, and there would be two 30-minute

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discussion periods.

SEARCHING FOR A CONFERENCE THEME - REGIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION OR SUB-NATIONAL GOVERNANCE

6.(C) Koenigs recommended that the Rome meeting highlight the theme of regional economic integration in order to give more concrete direction to preparations for the next Regional Economic Cooperation Conference to be held in late 2007 or early 2008 in Islamabad. The Ambassador strongly supported the concept, especially if the Rome talks could provide momentum to improving Afghanistan-Pakistan economic relations and resolving longstanding issues relating to transit trade through Pakistan. Recalling the JCMB V debate on an Indian insertion on regional cooperation to the JCMB Annual Report (reftel), the Ambassador cautioned that wider consultation, including with the Indian and Pakistani governments, would need to take place to make sure any language to which the JCMB would agree was acceptable to them. He underscored that if the Afghans and Pakistanis thought the discussion might stray onto the border issue, we would face two objections to having regional economic cooperation as the meeting's theme.

7.(C) NATO's Senior Civilian Representative noted that any forum is useful to discuss regional cooperation and suggested that the group just announce the issue and "endure the inevitable squabbling of the usual suspects." The Canadian representative stressed that Afghanistan's future economic viability depended on improving regional economic cooperation and suggested that the issue could be framed in such a way that the Pakistanis would accept it. Koenigs accepted that the issue be limited to regional cooperation on non-security issues and added that he would think carefully about consulting with the Indians and Pakistanis.

8.(C) UNAMA Political Deputy SRSG Alexander suggested that if the JCMB could not achieve consensus on regional economic cooperation as the JCMB VI theme, then sub-national governance could be a good alternative. He noted that issues like pay and grade reform, capacity building, and public administration reform could use a boost from capital

direction. The NATO representative indicated that he didn't believe political directors would come to Rome to discuss sub-national governance. However, they might come to talk about corruption, he suggested. The Canadian noted that the credibility of the GOA depended on its ability to decrease corruption and deliver sub-national governance.

INDIVIDUAL AGENDA ITEMS - CIVIL AVIATION, DIAG, ELECTIONS, AND ENERGY

9.(C) Koenigs proposed that the group consider the specific issues of civil aviation, DIAG, elections, and energy for the agenda. Koenigs volunteered UNAMA to deliver a report on election preparations and suggested that there be a report on the outcomes from the June DIAG conference in Tokyo. The NATO representative proposed that JCMB VI decide that civil aviation policy and assistance would be coordinated through the establishment of a new Consultative Group on civil aviation. This, he said, would replace the current NATO clearing house/steering committee mechanism. He stressed that the newly-created consultative group urgently needs to address the problem of the draft civil aviation law's subordination of a new civil aviation agency under the Ministry of Transportation and Civil Aviation. The NATO rep underscored his view that the new civil aviation agency should be completely independent of the ministry. In response, UNAMA, the World Bank, and the Ambassador noted that the existing ANDS Transportation Working Group is the appropriate venue for coordinating civil aviation issues.

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10.(C) The group warmly welcomed the Ambassador's recommendation to include energy on the agenda. Energy is the great enabler of economic growth, and there are a number of issues involving major donors and the IFIs that could be advanced in Rome, he said. The Asian Development Bank representative welcomed the proposal and noted that the Rome meeting could give an important boost to regional electricity development and cooperation. Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan could report on the status of their work on the North East Power System (NEPS). Deputy SRSG Alexander recommended that the Minister of Economy, as chairman of the Interministerial Committee on Energy, should open this discussion with a report on the status of projects in the energy sector.

11.(C) Koenigs closed the meeting with the conclusion that consensus had been reached to accept the Italian invitation pending coordination with the Afghan authorities, that Ambassadors would consult with capitals on the proposed agenda items and representation, and that the Informal Group would reconvened in two weeks.

ACTION REQUEST

12.(C) UNAMA has called a meeting of the JCMB informal group for May 27 to revisit these issues, including establishing a date for the meeting. The Italians are now suggesting a longer meeting on either July 2 or July 5. Post requests Department guidance for the May 27 Informal Group meeting.

WOOD